



## Another Treasure of Aruba's Beaches: Sea Glass!



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## Archivist says Equal Rights Amendment can't be certified as Democrats push Biden to recognize it

By **ZEKE MILLER**  
AP White House Correspondent

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — In a rare joint statement, the archivist and deputy archivist of the United States said Tuesday that the 1970s-era Equal Rights Amendment cannot be certified without further action by Congress or the courts, as Democrats press President Joe Biden to act unilaterally on its ratification before he leaves office next month. The five-decade push to amend the Constitution to prohibit discrimination based on sex remains stalled. Congress sent the amendment, which guarantees men and women equal rights under the law, to the states in 1972 and gave states seven years to ratify it, later extending the deadline to 1982. But the amendment wasn't ratified by the required three-quarters of states before the deadline.

Four years ago, however, Virginia lawmakers voted to ratify the amendment, becoming the 38th and final state needed — albeit nearly four decades after the congressionally mandated deadline for ratification.



ERA YES sign in the State Capitol Rotunda during a rally for the Equal Rights Amendment, Jan. 31, 2022 in St. Paul, Minn.

More than 120 House Democrats, led by Reps. Cori Bush and Ayanna Pressley, called on Biden on Sunday to direct the archivist to certify and publish the amendment despite the missed deadline. "Solidifying your legacy on equal rights with a final action on the ERA would be a defining moment for the historic Biden-Harris adminis-

tration and your presidency," they wrote to Biden. But the archivist, Colleen Shogan, and her deputy, William J. Bosanko, who are responsible for certifying and publishing new amendments once they meet the required ratification threshold, say neither they nor Biden can act without Congress or the courts lifting the deadline.

"In 2020 and again in 2022, the Office of Legal Counsel of the U.S. Department of Justice affirmed that the ratification deadline established by Congress for the ERA is valid and enforceable," they said in a joint statement. "The OLC concluded that extending or removing the deadline requires new action by Congress or the courts. Court

Associated Press

decisions at both the District and Circuit levels have affirmed that the ratification deadlines established by Congress for the ERA are valid." They added: "Therefore, the Archivist of the United States cannot legally publish the Equal Rights Amendment. As the leaders of the National Archives, we will abide by these legal precedents and support the constitutional framework in which we operate."

Congress tried last year in the latest push to lift the deadline to allow for the amendment's ratification, but the measure didn't reach the required 60-vote threshold in the Senate. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, who is leading the effort among Democrats in the Senate, insisted in a statement that the archivist's analysis was flawed and said she was "wrongfully inserting herself into a clear constitutional process, despite the fact that her role is purely ministerial." She encouraged Biden to ignore the OLC memo and certify the ERA anyway. "OLC memos are advisory in nature and can easily be disregarded by the current administration," she said. □

## Jill Biden says she has closed the book on teaching at Northern Virginia Community College

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Jill Biden has closed the book on her teaching career at a Virginia community college. The first lady, who has spent the past 40 years teaching in classrooms, announced Monday that she had taught her final class at Northern Virginia Community College last week. The surprise announcement came during a virtual "thank you" event

with teachers tuning in from around the country. "Being your first lady has been the honor of my life. But being your colleague has been the work of my life," she said. "Last Thursday, I taught my last class of the semester and my final class ever at Northern Virginia Community College." "I will always love this profession, which is why I continued to teach full time while serving as your first lady," said Biden, who was

joined on a sofa by teachers' union presidents Randi Weingarten, of the American Federation of Teachers, and Becky Pringle, of the National Education Association. Biden had taught English and writing at NOVA for 15 years. She is the first woman to continue her professional career outside the White House while serving as first lady. The announcement comes as she and President Joe Biden prepare to leave the White

House in about five weeks after the Democrat dropped his bid for reelection after a poor debate performance against Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump over the summer. Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris succeeded Biden, but she lost the presidential race to Trump, who is set to be inaugurated to a second term on Jan. 20. It was not immediately clear whether Jill Biden, 73, was

retiring from teaching altogether. Aides had no immediate comment. "As she retires after an exemplary career, she leaves a lasting legacy in the lives of the students she taught, mentored and inspired over the years," Kress said in a statement Tuesday. "She has been a remarkable, unequalled champion for America's community colleges, and we know that her advocacy will continue." □



# Lawsuit accuses State Department of creating loopholes for Israel on military aid and human rights

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The State Department has carved out exceptions for close ally Israel that block a U.S. law restricting foreign military support over human rights abuses, a lawsuit from a group of Palestinians in Gaza and American relatives asserted Tuesday.

Former State Department officials and crafters of the 1997 Leahy law were among those advising and backing the lawsuit.

The lawsuit details the barriers that it accuses the State Department of creating on Israel's behalf to skirt enforcement and asks courts to intervene. That is after campus protests and moves by some lawmakers failed in their goal of limiting U.S. military support to Israel over civilian deaths in Gaza during the war with Hamas.

"It's really a modest set of goals here: There's a U.S. law. We'd like the federal government to adhere to U.S. law," said Ahmed Moor, a Philadelphia-based Palestinian American who joined the lawsuit on behalf of cousins, uncles and aunts displaced and killed in the 14-month war.

The law bars U.S. military assistance to foreign military units when there is credible evidence of gross human rights abuses.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has denied that the department has given Israel a pass. "Do we have a double standard? The answer is no," he said in April. The State and Justice departments declined to comment Tuesday.

Israel says it makes every effort to limit harm to Palestinian civilians in its military operations. The Biden administration has warned Israel to do more to spare civilians in the Gaza war, holding back one known weapons shipment of 2,000-pound bombs.

A State Department report in May concluded there was "reasonable"



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in the central Gaza Strip, July 10, 2024.

Associated Press

evidence that Israel's use of U.S.-provided weapons in Gaza violated international law that protects civilians but bypassed a decision on limiting arms, saying the war itself made it impossible for U.S. officials to judge for certain. It also declined last month to hold back arms transfers as it had threatened over humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Charles Blaha, a former State Department official who helped oversee reviews under the Leahy law, argued that enforcing the law for Israel would have prevented much of the harm that civilians in Gaza are suffering.

"The secretary of state has made all the decisions so far on Israel and the Leahy law, and every single decision has resulted in those units being eligible" for continued U.S. military support, Blaha said. "And that's not the way the normal process works."

U.S. military support to Israel in the light of Palestinian civilian deaths was a fraught issue in the presidential election. Republicans and many Democrats demanded unwavering military backing to Israel. The Biden administration's refusal to limit support cost Democrats some votes from some Arab and Muslim voters and others.

Tuesday's lawsuit is part of a last push on the outgoing Biden administration by Muslim Americans and others to limit U.S. military support to Israel, which is estimated to have reached \$17.9 billion in the first year of the war over its treatment of Palestinian civilians. Two former Senate staffers, Tim Reiser and Stephen Rickard, were instrumental in crafting the law named for former Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy and said the rising death toll in Gaza warranted the court case. The non-profit Democracy for the Arab World Now, an Arab-rights group founded by slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

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# U.S. to pay nearly \$116M to settle lawsuits over rampant sexual abuse at California women's prison

By **MICHAEL R. SISAK and MICHAEL BALSAMO**  
**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The U.S. government will pay nearly \$116 million to resolve lawsuits brought by more than 100 women who say they were abused or mistreated at a now-shuttered federal prison in California that was known as the "rape club" because of rampant staff-on-inmate sexual misconduct.

Under settlements approved Tuesday, the Justice Department will pay an average of about \$1.1 million to each of 103 women who filed individual lawsuits against the Bureau of Prisons over their treatment at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California.

The settlement follows one in a separate class-action last week in which the Bureau of Prisons agreed to open some of its facilities to a court-appointed monitor and publicly acknowledge pervasive abuse and retaliation at FCI Dublin.

"We were sentenced to prison, we were not sentenced to be assaulted and abused," lawsuit plaintiff and former Dublin prisoner Aimee Chavira said. "I hope this settlement will help survivors, like me, as they begin to heal — but



The Federal Correctional Institution stands in Dublin, Calif., Dec. 5, 2022.

money will not repair the harm that BOP did to us, or free survivors who continue to suffer in prison, or bring back survivors who were deported and separated from their families," Chavira said.

The Bureau of Prisons acknowledged the settlements in a statement Tuesday.

The agency said it "strongly condemns all forms of sexually abusive behavior and takes seriously its duty to protect the individuals in our custody as well as maintain the safety of our

employees and community."

Tuesday's settlements cover an initial wave of lawsuits seeking monetary compensation from the Bureau of Prisons after a former warden and other employees at FCI Dublin went to prison for sexually abusing inmates. Subsequent lawsuits have yet to be resolved.

The Bureau of Prisons and lawyers for the plaintiffs said that a neutral, third-party process was used to determine individual settlement amounts.

**Associated Press**

Last week, in settling the class-action lawsuit, the Bureau of Prisons and plaintiffs' lawyers filed a proposed consent decree calling for a variety of reforms, including a monitor to scrutinize the treatment of nearly 500 ex-Dublin prisoners now housed at more than a dozen federal lockups across the U.S.

Also under that agreement, agency director Colette Peters "will issue a formal, public acknowledgement to victims of staff sexual abuse at FCI Dublin" as part of the settlement.

The Bureau of Prisons temporarily closed FCI Dublin in April and announced last week that the low-security facility was being permanently shut down.

The Bureau of Prisons said in a statement that it agreed to "the substantive terms of a proposed settlement to resolve all injunctive claims" in the class-action lawsuit on Nov. 21 and that while that settlement was filed with the district court Friday, "the decision to permanently close (FCI Dublin) is not a result of the agreement."

Some of the women who alleged abuse at Dublin say they have been the victims of similar misconduct at other institutions, and the AP has found multiple arrests and convictions of Bureau of Prisons staff members for sexually abusing prisoners at other federal lockups.

An AP investigation found a culture of abuse and cover-ups that had persisted for years at the prison. That reporting led to increased scrutiny from Congress and pledges from the Bureau of Prisons that it would fix problems and change the culture at the prison promises that went by the wayside with Thursday's closure announcement. □

# U.S. border facilities for migrant children are improving but still need work, court monitor says



In this March 30, 2021, file photo, young minors lie inside a pod at the Donna Department of Homeland Security holding facility, the main detention center for unaccompanied children in the Rio Grande Valley run by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), in Donna, Texas.

**Associated Press**

By **VALERIE GONZALEZ**  
**Associated Press**

**McALLEN, Texas (AP)** — The U.S. still separates some migrant children from parents while holding them after they cross the border despite broad improvements at detention centers in Texas, according to a court-ordered monitor's final report.

The heightened scrutiny of the Border Patrol's Texas holding facilities is part of broader court-appointed oversight, which President-elect Donald Trump and his allies have criticized.

The report, issued Friday under a monitoring agree-

ment that began in 2022, offers a final glimpse into conditions inside the facilities ahead of Trump's return to office. The report noted improvements to hygiene, food and medical care but found that U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents routinely separated children from adult relatives during their time in custody. Unlike separations that happened under Trump's zero tolerance border policy during his first term, those noted in the report were temporary and did not involve sending adults to Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention

while they were criminally prosecuted and children to shelters for minors.

At a facility in Donna, Texas, in September, agents "continued to routinely hold children separately from parents or trusted adults," the report said. By November, the monitor called regular visits among family at the same facility "encouraging." Workers at the facility said they could arrange visits because it was no longer overcrowded.

CBP said they issued new guidance on family unity and increased training on detention policies, guidelines and regulations. □



# Netanyahu says Israeli troops will occupy a buffer zone inside Syria for the foreseeable future

By MELANIE LIDMAN

Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that Israeli forces will stay in a buffer zone on the Syrian border, and specifically on the summit of Mount Hermon, "until another arrangement is found that will ensure Israel's security."

Netanyahu made the comments from the mountain's summit the highest peak in the area which is inside Syria, about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the border with the Israel-held Golan Heights.

This was apparently the first time a sitting Israeli leader had set foot this far into Syria. Netanyahu said he had been on the summit of Mount Hermon 53 years ago as a soldier, but the summit's importance to Israel's security has only increased given recent events.

Israel seized a swath of southern Syria along the border with the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights in the days after Syrian President Bashar Assad was ousted



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, left, visits Israeli forces in a buffer zone inside Syria, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024.

by rebels.

Israel's capture of the buffer zone, a roughly 400-square-kilometer (155-square-mile) demilitarized area in Syrian territory, has sparked condemnation, with critics accusing Israel of violating a 1974 ceasefire and possibly exploiting the chaos in Syria in the wake of Assad's oust-

er to make a land grab.

Netanyahu traveled to the buffer zone with Defense Minister Israel Katz, who said he instructed the Israeli military to quickly establish a presence including fortifications, in anticipation of what could be an extended stay in the area.

"The summit of the Hermon

is the eyes of the state of Israel to identify our enemies who are nearby and far away," Katz said.

An Israeli military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said there is no plan to evacuate the Syrians living in villages within the buffer zone.

Associated Press

The buffer zone between Syria and the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights was created by the U.N. after the 1973 Mideast war. A U.N. force of about 1,100 troops had patrolled the area since then.

A U.N. spokesman said Tuesday that the advance of Israeli troops, however long it lasts, violates the 1974 deal that set up the buffer zone.

That agreement "needs to be respected, and occupation is occupation, whether it lasts a week, a month or a year, it remains occupation," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

There was no immediate comment from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the insurgent group that led the ouster of Assad, or from Arab states. Israel still controls the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria during the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed a move not recognized by most of the international community. Mount Hermon's summit is divided between the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, Lebanon, and Syria. □

# Canada imposes economic sanctions on 5 Venezuelan officials, including the high court president

**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)**

— Canada imposed economic sanctions on Tuesday on five Venezuelan officials, including the head of the country's high court, accusing them of engaging in electoral fraud during the disputed July presidential election.

Both Venezuela's incumbent President Nicolás Maduro and the political opposition with its candidate Edmundo González, who is now in exile in Spain, and its leader Maria Corina Machado, who is in hiding in Venezuela claim to have won the July 28 vote. Tuesday's announcement from Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly marked the fourth time Canada has sanctioned individuals linked to Madu-

ro's government.

Maduro's government swiftly denounced the sanctions as "extortionate measures" and "a failed attempt to pressure Venezuela."

The development comes less than a month before Venezuela's next presidential term is set to begin.

Canada's measure seeks to add pressure on Venezuela's de facto authorities to "respect the will of the Venezuelan people," according to the statement from the ministry of foreign affairs.

"The sanctions also aim to dissuade the authorities from taking further actions that violate the human rights of protesters, journalists, opposition leaders and other members of civil soci-

ety," the ministry said.

In addition to Carylslia Rodríguez, president of Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice, those sanctioned include two judges, a prosecutor and a member of the country's electoral body.

Venezuela's protracted political crisis deepened after the highly anticipated presidential election. The country's National Electoral Council, stacked with Maduro loyalists, declared him the winner hours after polls closed.

However, unlike previous presidential elections, electoral authorities did not provide detailed vote counts. Meanwhile, the opposition, led by Machado, collected tally sheets from 80% of the nation's electronic

voting machines, posted them online and said the voting records showed that the faction's candidate, González, had won the election with twice as many votes as Maduro.

Global condemnation over

the lack of transparency prompted Maduro to ask Venezuela's high court, also stacked with ruling-party loyalists and led by Rodríguez, to audit the results. □



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro waits to receive attendees at the start of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) Summit in Caracas, Venezuela, Dec. 14, 2024.

Associated Press



# Iran pauses the process to implement a new, stricter headscarf law for women, official says

By **AMIR VAHDAT** and **NASSER KARIMI**  
**Associated Press**

**TEHRAN, Iran (AP)** — Iran has paused the process of implementing a new, stricter law on women's mandatory headscarf, or hijab, an official said a bill that many believe could have reignited the protests that engulfed the Islamic Republic after the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini.

The controversial law, which was approved by the parliament in September 2023, will not be sent to the government as planned this week, according to one of the country's vice presidents. The development effectively means that Iran has halted enacting the legislation.

The law levies harsher punishments for women who refuse to wear the hijab and for businesses that serve them, penalties previously rejected by Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian as he tries to restart talks with the West over sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear program.

"According to the discussions held, it was decided that this law will not be referred to the government by the parliament for now," Shahram Dabiri, the



**Iranian women, some without wearing their mandatory Islamic headscarves, walk in downtown Tehran, Iran, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023.**

**Associated Press**

vice president in charge of parliamentary affairs, was quoted as saying in an interview Monday with the pro-reform Ham Mihan daily.

The decision to halt the legislation at least temporarily was reached by top executive, legislative and judiciary bodies, Dabiri also said. At the moment, it is "not feasible to implement this bill," he added, without elaborating.

Had the bill passed to the government, Iran's president would have had little room to maneuver. By law, he's required to endorse the bill within five days, after which it would have taken effect in 15 days. The president has no authority to veto it.

Pezeshkian could try to convince Iran's 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state,

to halt the bill.

If the bill had been enacted, Pezeshkian could also refuse to act on it or urge police not to enforce it, setting up a potential constitutional crisis that hardliners could try to exploit to weaken him.

The president had earlier described the law as having "many questions and ambiguities."

Amini died on Sept. 16, 2022, after her arrest by the

country's morality police over allegedly not wearing her hijab to the liking of the authorities.

Iran has denied being responsible for her death and disputes she was beaten. However, United Nations investigators have concluded Amini "was subjected to physical violence that led to her death," which they blamed on the morality police.

The monthslong security crackdown that followed Amini's death killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained.

In the years since, Iranian women on the streets increasingly have ignored the existing hijab law, walking in public with their hair uncovered despite the threat of arrest or harassment.

The new, 74-section law envisages fines of \$800 for first offenses and \$1,500 for second offenses, followed by prison terms of up to 15 years for third offenses. Also, celebrities and public figures could see the confiscation of 8% of their net worth, while businesses face the possibility of closure and fines for serving those not wearing a headscarf. □

## Blast kills 2 Mexican soldiers and wounds 5 others in suspected booby trap by drug cartel

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — An improvised land mine apparently planted by a drug cartel killed two Mexican soldiers and wounded five others, Mexico's defense secretary said Tuesday.

Gen. Ricardo Trevilla acknowledged that the army had already suffered six deaths from such improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, between 2018 and 2024. But he didn't specify whether those six had been killed by bombs dropped from drones, or by buried roadside bombs, both of which have been used by gangs in Mexico.

Trevilla said that devices like the one that exploded

Monday were "very rustic," and officials in the past have described them as similar to buried pipe bombs. There was no immediate information on the condition of the five wounded in the attack, which included at least one officer. Trevilla's description of the location where the two soldiers died Monday in the western state of Michoacan suggested that it may have been a sort of grisly drug cartel booby trap. Trevilla said the army sent out a patrol to check on reports that there was an encampment of armed men in a rural area. The armed forces detected an

area protected by stockades that appeared to be an encampment, but when soldiers approached in vehicles, they found the trail blocked by logs, so they descended and had to approach on foot.

While approaching, they spotted three dismembered bodies near the encampment, which appeared to be abandoned. But as they drew closer, a buried device exploded and struck the soldiers.

Trevilla blamed the blast on the United Cartels, an umbrella group that includes the local Viagras gang, which has been fighting bloody turf battles against

the Jalisco cartel in Michoacan for years.

In August, the Mexican army acknowledged that

some of its soldiers have been killed by bomb-dropping drones operated by drug cartels. □



**A soldier enters a bullet-riddled home covered by the initials of the Gulf Cartel (CDG) and Zetas (Z) in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas state, Mexico, Sept. 6, 2014.**

**Associated Press**





## The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

**(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.**

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king

One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't

get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by? “Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.

“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

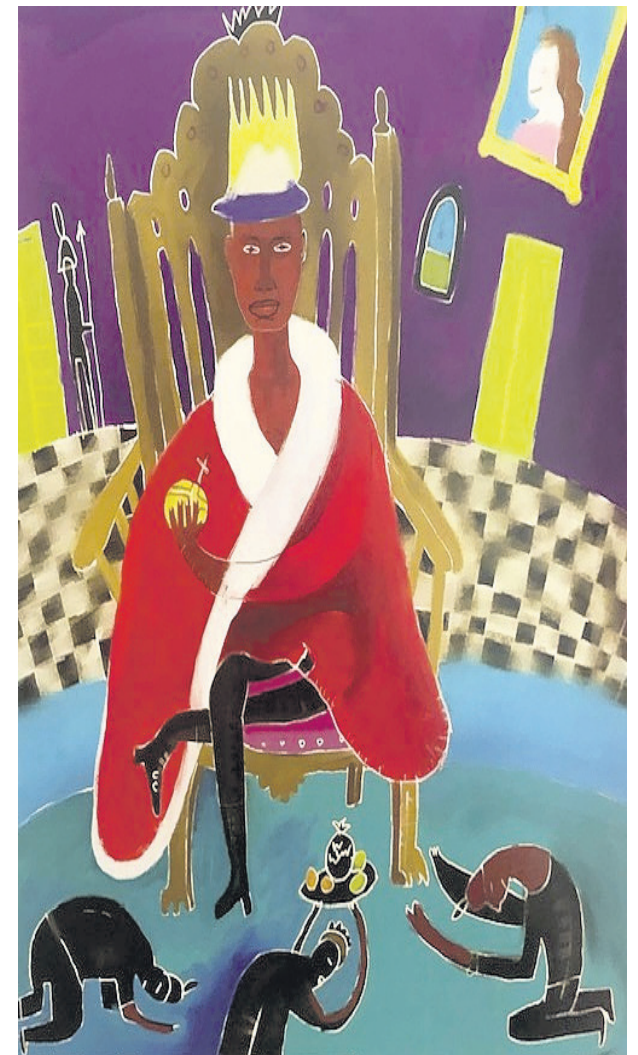
Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”


“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what, there is so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king. “What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's thrown and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king.

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.








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Another Treasure of Aruba’s Beaches: Sea Glass!



**NOORD** - It is hard to imagine this happening today, but years ago people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass. Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach, by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth. Tons of polished, broken glass pieces were created by the pounding surf. These smoothened, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and that is why you can find these beautiful and colorful pieces on the north

shore beaches of Aruba.

Especially on the strip on white sand between the famous Natural Bridge" and the huge red anchor close to "Grapefield" beach you will be able to find your own pieces of sea glass. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process. It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass. The name for any piece of glass that finds its way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough is "Sea glass. The colorful pieces of glass are being used for decoration, handcrafts and jewelry! Once glass makes its way

into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges. Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

For years, the water beat against the different kinds of trash being dumped. Glass, household appliances and even motor parts were discarded on the beach. The waves and weather conditions wore down the overwhelming amount of garbage in the water, creating millions of beautiful smooth rocks.

It's hard to believe the short-sighted mistakes we were making that could have potentially ruined these beautiful beaches. But thanks to natural processes, the ocean transformed the trash into the sea glass. Each colored gem on the beach has its own story.

The ruby red glass stones are typically from old car tail-lights.

Then, the sapphire rocks are the remnants of broken



apothecary bottles. The most common and the easiest to find are the brown (Amstel & Polar beer), green (Heineken & Balashi beer) and clear glass which are the soft much loved "soft drink" bottles.

If you like to see the sea glass for yourself, and be in awe of the power of nature, rent a car or jeep and go explore our deserted beaches on the north side of the island. Make it a fun family day! Even if we didn't mean to pollute the Beaches how we did, it is inspiring to see just how the earth can correct

our mistakes.

Funny, how trash can change into treasures!

Everybody knows that you are not allowed to take local shells home, but the people working at the airport have no problem you taking sea glass home. A few of those pieces make great souvenirs. You can place them in a wine glass or large bottle for decoration and every time you look at it a smile will light up your face thinking back of your unforgettable Aruba vacation! □



Aruba to me

**ORANJESTAD** — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubato-day.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. □



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# Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!



**(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.**

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For

many years, this site was also a frequently visited beach, as the bridge had a small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge".



# Birds of Aruba

**ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.**

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and

descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.

## The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

## Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm.

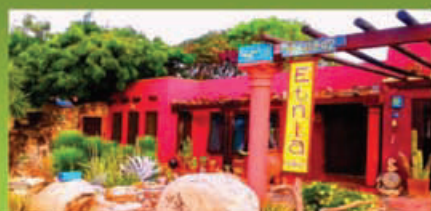
Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.

## Cabochoon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory.  
English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).  
Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect.







Article by Etnia Nativa

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## Arubans traits

Every week, Etnia Nativa, which means “native ethnicity”, writes a new episode concerning culture and heritage, focusing on various aspects of native knowledge, transcendental wisdom, and the importance of upholding cultural identity. Its goal is to educate readers and connect them with “our sense of belonging”.

“The real “sense of belonging is” to be aware and have emotionally accepted and incorporated intellectually Aruba’s real history, which includes all those Arubans who thrived before one’s own existence had even begun”. — From the book “Cultural & Genetic Heritage of Arubans”

There are many foreign authors who prefer to deny the island’s native heritage, even in some school books, following various theories that government authorities adhere to. However, scientific research performed by Aruban authors has proven otherwise, that the islands’ indigenous roots are dominant in the traditional Aruban genome, supporting and sustaining Etnia Nativa’s claim.

Like every ethnic group, some Aruban people share similar racial characteristics, among which we can highlight the characteristics of “slanted eyes” and “straight black hair”, mongoloid traits largely derived from “indigenous features”, also the Mongolian spot, known as slate gray nevus or congenital dermal melanocytosis, a benign, flat, congenital birthmark, or blue butt mark which have been preserved much more strongly in the population of Aruba than in those of Bonaire or Curaçao.

Some historians claim that these indigenous traits do not originate from the inhabitants before the arrival of the Europeans, since “supposedly” the majority

had been “evacuated” in 1513, but rather are common traits related to the indigenous people who settled on the island from 1640 onwards, who, as a result of the economic and demographic policy of the WIC, were able to lead a free life on the island and consequently remain longer than in Curaçao or Bonaire.

However, such accounts were very common from the European perspective of recorded history. Some Aruban authors conclude that Amerindian genes are very strong in Arubans and that, genetically, Amerindians have never become extinct on the island, convincingly demonstrating this through mitochondrial DNA and introduced by Aruba’s maternal Amerindian genetic ancestors. In the medical-scientific mt-DNA study entitled “Genetic structure of the Aruban population: three origins”, the theory that Arubans became extinct due to European colonizers is refuted, while demonstrating who is considered Aruban since colonial times.

In 2001, during the 19th International Congress of Caribbean Archeology, Etnia Nativa was presented the opportunity to acknowledge the ancestral existence of Arubans by bringing together two professionals in this field - Dr. Oswald Wever (Aruba) and Dr. Martinez Cruzado (Puerto Rico) - who discovered facts behind our Amerindian genetic history. We must mention that Etnia Nativa’s curator was

## Episode CCLXXXIV- 284



the first subject studied carrying a native mt-DNA. Shortly after, the first results on the genetic identity of Aruba and its ancestral links were published in the previously mentioned medical-scientific mt-DNA study.

The mitochondrial DNA made from certain Mongoloid traits exhibited by a group of the native population determined not only the origin of our maternal ancestors but also those with whom we are related in the maternal line, and also investigated the genetic pool of the region. In this way, it is possible to find out which families come from the same region, how closely intertwined they are related, and which haplo-groups and, consequently, which haplotypes are still present in our aboriginal contemporary population.

These results should not only be compared with entries in a family tree, but also possibly with historical and geo-

graphic sources. For example, was this region a Caquetio settlement? Find out what traces these people have left in their genes which are still present in the current population. Perhaps this home settlement represents an important part of Aruba’s forgotten history. Follow each episode of “Island Insight” and learn a lot about our little beloved rock.

If you enjoy reading our stories and are interested in learning more regarding the true identity of Aruba, we recommend booking a visit to Etnia Nativa—the only “living museum of its kind in the Caribbean”—a fascinating choice, a trend setter since 1994 and co-founder of Islands National Park, Archaeological Museum Aruba and Artisan Foundation among others. Etnia Nativa shares valuable knowledge and connects you to the ancient island’s spirit and soul. Whats App +297 592 2702 etniana-tiva03@gmail.com





# The Aruban Cunukero

## From past to present

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's culture consists of rich historical traditions that make up the Aruban identity and lifestyle. However, the life of the cunukero (farmer) is perhaps the most important aspect of our culture, in a sense representing to locals the true essence of the Aruban.

Historically, cunucus (farms) played a huge role in the early social and economic development of Aruba, and its relevance dates back to the early days of the colonization era. Upon being discovered by Spanish conquistadors in the late 15th century, Aruba was used primarily as a ranch, housing horses and cattle brought from Europe. During the Dutch colonization era where the West Indian Company (WIC) dominated the economic sphere on the island, using the land to set up cattle farms and ranches remained popular.



### Anthropologist Sidney Mintz divided Caribbean farmers back in four categories:

1. The "squatters", who were mostly comprised of illegal and poor colonists, runaway slaves and deserters who took advantage of the Spanish's weak supervision on Caribbean islands like Cuba and the DR;
2. Then you have "Early Yeomen", who were legal farmers who came to the west under contract. Once their contract expired, they were given a plot of land for independent use;
3. Proto-Peasants were plantation slaves who were allowed to have a small piece of land to grow food for their own consumption. This was to curb the cost of living on the plantations;
4. Lastly you have the "Runaway Peasant-ries", usually comprised of runaway slaves who acquired farming tools and cattle through stealing or through secret exchanges with

other slaves from different plantations.

However, the Aruban cunukeros back then are hard to place, and their history may explain why.

From 1636 (beginning of Dutch colonization era) to before the oil industry in 1924, Aruba's population consisted of mostly farmers. These farmers were mostly indigenous and were characterized as peasants. They weren't allowed to participate in trading, but instead were granted a piece of land to live off of. However, in exchange for this grant, these indigenous farmers were obligated to work for the WIC, doing daily tasks such as taking care of or hunting cattle—large majority of which were destined for Curacao, clean water tanks and chop wood, among other things.

As much as these farmers were given to opportunity to live "free" with a plot of land, their exclusion from the trading and business world, as well as being deprived the chance to be-

come real property and cattle owners, made them a unique group among Caribbean farmers at the time.

The WIC placed a lot of restrictions on these indigenous farmers—a method to safeguard their cattle deposit on the island. The indigenous farmers were mostly granted less than 7 acres of land. Those who owned bigger land were either once affiliated with the WIC or were colonists who settled on the island to try their luck at farming. In 1767, there were about 120 houses/cunucus on the island.

These Aruban farmers were also limited to the amount of cattle they could keep. Most kept goats as cattle, as only those who were affiliated with the WIC could keep (more) sheep. Of the 76 goat herders on the island, about 45 of them had less than 30 goats, and only 7 of them had more than 60 goats.

It wasn't until the WIC was defunct in late 18th cen-

tury that these farmers were able to obtain more freedom as cunukeros. After 1824, the government gave these farmers official permission to keep livestock, and the obligations once placed on them were officially discarded.

Because of the dry climate in Aruba, growing food for commercial purposes was not popular. The focus was mainly on cattle herding and taking care of livestock. However, livestock need food to survive, and when Aruba experienced its duper dry climate, many farmers would see a big loss in their livestock, and hence profit.

Although the WIC at one point did try to come up with an initiative to get more people to have land on the island, the climate never really allowed real profit from farming. Because of the climate, Aruban farmers in general could not keep large quantities of livestock. At a certain point toward the end of the 18th century, the climate got so bad that

many farmers decided to leave the island for a while.

For this reason, the farming economy on the island remained small. As the years went by and people noticed that these farms could not really produce any sustainable profit, farmers kept their small piece of land just to live off of. This is why the Aruban cunukeros only played a very tiny role into the plantation economy.

In modern Aruba, cunucus and cunukeros still exist on the island, fortunately with more freedom and more opportunity to tap into the agricultural market. These farmers usually sell their produce on a smaller scale, like during farmers' market events and other types of (holiday) events.

Source: "Arubaans Akkoord: Opstellen over Aruba van voor de komst van de olieindustrie (Aruban Accord: Essays on Aruba Before the Arrival of the Oil Industry)" by Alofs, Luc; Rutgers, Wim; Coomans, Henry E. red. □



## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 38 Principle

1 Richard of "Chicago" 39 Circus structures

5 Cavalry base 40 Hot, in a way

9 Insuper 41 Mine rocks

10 Shaq of the NBA

12 Spoken tests

13 Temple leader

14 Roof features

16 Chicken — king

17 Hideous

18 Sway

21 Catch sight of

22 Kayaks' cousins

23 Moscow money

24 Rather

26 Viet-nameese New Year

29 Singer King

30 Surrounding glow

31 Epitome of easiness

32 Dark-furred martens

34 Bed boards

37 Between-meals nosh

### DOWN

1 Mechanic's place

2 Facilitate

3 Political meeting

4 Different

5 In favor of

6 Stop — dime

7 Money-back offer

8 Café fixtures

9 Fake

11 Teller of tales

15 Horse houses

19 Just

20 Foot part

22 Area under a wave

23 Carnival city

24 Aesop's output

25 Secret

26 New Orleans university

27 Builds

28 Chores

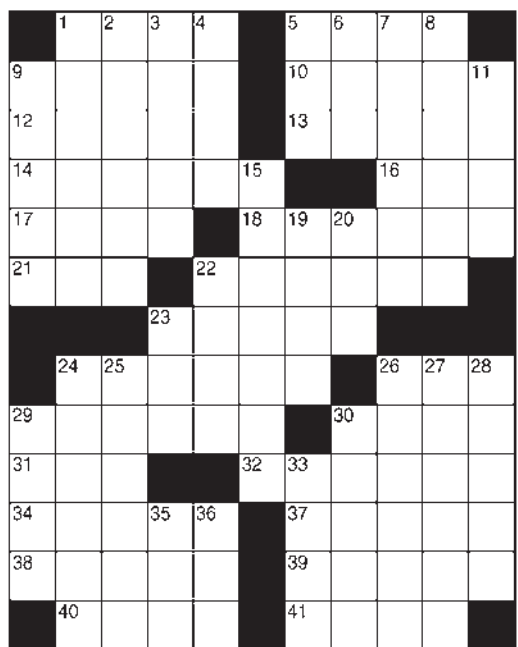
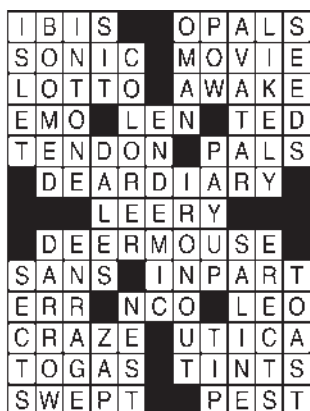
29 Group of actors

30 Dogpatch boy

33 Regarding

35 Cowboy nickname

36 Pig's place



12-18

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-18 CRYPTOQUOTE

JHG PUI RWZ WYPFZX UAHGZ

ZQW MGZGLW. ZQW VUNZ SHI'Z

DFIX. — QFOOULJ XWVFUIH  
Cryptoquote: FAMILY IS NOT AN  
IMPORTANT THING. IT'S EVERYTHING. —  
MICHAEL J. FOX

## Cruise ship Schedule: December 16 - 22 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	16	ENCHANTED PRINCESS	08.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	17	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I	1
WED	18	NORWEGIAN JEWEL	14.30	21.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
FRI	20	CARNIVAL MIRACLE	09.00	22.00	C	1
SAT	21	STAR CLIPPER	09.00	18.00	I	1
		EXPLORER OF THE SEAS	16.30	****	C	1
		STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	B	1
SUN	22	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - dept.	****	18.00	C	-
		FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-

## Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

ceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

### Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

### Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

### Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water ex-

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Eagle beach

One bedroom week 02

Room # 5538

Pool view Saturday check in

Price :\$9000

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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

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WK 51 Ocean view \$65,000  
WK 52 Ocean View \$65,000  
WK 7 and 14 - all views

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2 Bed Ocean view \$13,500  
2 Bed Garden view \$12,000  
3 Bed Ocean view \$30,000

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1 Bed Ocean front \$21,000  
1 Bed Ocean View \$17,000

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Building D  
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## Divi Village

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Building D 1 st floor  
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# 953 One bedroom week 01  
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ary 2025  
All inclusive  
Price :\$5000 each week  
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contract Price :\$ 8000  
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contract Price : \$ 12,000  
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Studio WK # 3  
room # 2317 \$8000  
Both units :\$16,000  
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Studio WK # 4 room # 2129  
Contract expire :12/31/2045  
Price :\$8000  
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Studio week 5,6,7,8,9  
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Noord	527 3200
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## 2024 was big for bitcoin. States could see a crypto policy blitz in 2025 in spite of the risks

**By MARC LEVY**

**Associated Press**

**HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) —**

The new year will usher in the bitcoin-friendly administration of President-elect Donald Trump and an expanding lobbying effort in statehouses that, together, could push states to become more open to crypto and for public pension funds and treasuries to buy into it.

Proponents of the uniquely volatile commodity argue it is a valuable hedge against inflation, similar to gold.

Many bitcoin enthusiasts and investors are quick to criticize government-backed currencies as prone to devaluation and say increased government buy-in will stabilize bitcoin's future price swings, give it more legitimacy and further boost an already rising price.

But the risks are significant. Critics say a crypto invest-



An advertisement of Bitcoin, one of the cryptocurrencies, is displayed on a building in Hong Kong, on Nov. 18, 2021.

**Associated Press**

ment is highly speculative, with so much unknown about projecting its future returns, and warn that investors should be prepared to lose money.

Only a couple public pension funds have invested in cryptocurrency and a new U.S. Government Accountability Office study on 401(k) plan investments in crypto, issued in recent days, warned it has “uniquely high volatility” and that it found no standard approach for projecting the future returns of crypto.

It has already been a land-

mark year for crypto, with bitcoin hitting \$100,000, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission approving the first exchange-traded funds that hold bitcoin and crypto enthusiasts being cheered by Trump's promise to make the United States the "bitcoin superpower" of the world.

More legislation on crypto could be coming  
Lawmakers in more states can expect to see bills in 2025 to make them crypto-friendly as analysts say crypto is becoming a powerful lobby, bitcoin miners

build new installations and venture capitalists underwrite a growing tech sector that caters to cryptocurrencies.

Meanwhile, a new crypto-friendly federal government under Trump and Congress could consider legislation from Sen. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyoming, to create a federal bitcoin reserve on which states can piggyback.

A bill introduced last month in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives sought to authorize the state's treasurer and public pension funds to invest in bitcoin. It went nowhere before the legislative session ended, but it caused a stir.

"I had a friend who is a rep down the road text me, 'Oh my god, I'm getting so many emails and phone calls to my office,' more than he ever did about any other bill," said the measure's sponsor, Republican Mike Cabell.

Cabell a bitcoin enthusiast who lost his reelection bid expects his bill to be reintroduced by a colleague. And leaders of bitcoin advocacy group Satoshi Action say they expect bills based on their model bill to be introduced in at least 10 other states next year.

But what about public pension funds?

Keith Brainard, research director for the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, said he doesn't expect many public pension fund investment professionals, who oversee nearly \$6 trillion in assets, to invest in crypto.

Pension fund professionals take risks they deem to be appropriate, but bitcoin investing has a short track record, might only fit into a niche asset class and may not fit the risk-to-reward profile they seek.

"There might be a bit of dabbling in bitcoin," Brainard said.

"But it's difficult to envision a scenario in which pension funds right now are willing to make a commitment."


In Louisiana, Treasurer John Fleming helped make the state the first to introduce a system by which people can pay a government agency in cryptocurrencies.

Fleming said he's not trying to promote cryptocurrency, but rather sees the step as a recognition that government must innovate and be flexible in helping people make financial transactions with the state. He said he would never invest his money, or the state's, in crypto.

Fleming recalled meeting with a bitcoin lobbyist recently and came away unconvinced that bitcoin makes for a good investment.

"My concern is that at some point it'll stop growing and then people will want to cash in," Fleming said.

"And when they do, it could tank the value of a bitcoin."

In Pennsylvania, Treasury Department officials said they have the authority to decide for themselves if cryptocurrencies meet the agency's investment standards under state law and don't need new legislation. Still, a highly volatile asset is ill-suited to the agency's need for predictability, considering it writes millions of checks a year. 

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# As NBA rolls out new All-Star format, the stars taking a wait-and-see approach

By **TIM REYNOLDS**  
**AP Basketball Writer**

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — Milwaukee Bucks guard Damian Lillard is the reigning NBA All-Star Game MVP, after scoring 39 points last February in the highest-scoring game the league has ever seen.

East 211, West 186.

It rewrote the record book. It did not make the league happy.

So, the NBA is changing the how the midseason showcase works once again. The league has announced the finalized changes for the reimagined All-Star Game, turning it into a one-night tournament the Sunday night of All-Star weekend and following the format that the Rising Stars Challenge for rookies and second-year players has used in recent years.

The NBA's hope is simply this: By getting players to compete even a little bit more, the product will be more compelling, and more people will watch. Ratings have plummeted in recent years, viewers evidently not loving the constant stream of lobs, 3-pointers, dunks and zero defense.

"I understand what's be-



**Milwaukee Bucks guard Damian Lillard (0) shoots against Atlanta Hawks forward Jalen Johnson (1) during the second half of a semifinal game in the NBA Cup basketball tournament Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024, in Las Vegas.**

**Associated Press**

ing attempted," Lillard said. "You want to create some type of competitiveness in that game on Sunday. You want to try to mix it up to try to find a way to make it more entertaining. We'll see."

The new format largely mirrors the one used for the Rising Stars games since 2022. For Rising Stars, the NBA brings the best rookies and sophomores to All-Star

weekend and splits them into four teams. There are two semifinal games the first team to 50 points was the winner in Year 1, the first team to 40 points has been the winner of the semifinals in 2023 and 2024. And the semifinal winners meet in a championship game that same night, first to 25 points winning.

The All-Star format this year will see 24 players being

selected 10 will be designated as starters, 14 as reserves, even though that's not how it will work on game night. The 24 players will be drafted into three teams of eight, and the Rising Stars winning team will remain to compete as the fourth team in the All-Star tournament. There will be two semifinal games to 40 points, and then a final to 40 points. "If I get a chance

to go, obviously it's a blessing," Oklahoma City star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I support whatever they do because it's an honor to be there."

Improving the All-Star product has been a priority of Commissioner Adam Silver and the league office for some time. Nobody is expecting a Game 7, playoff-type level of competitiveness. Nobody is hoping to see something akin of Pete Rose running over Ray Fosse at home plate in the 1970 Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

What the league wants, yet again, is just a little more competition. The league tried it with a target-score ending for a few years, tried it with captains picking their own teams, and now will try the tournament. "We're looking at other formats," Silver said on Nov. 2, which was his way of announcing that changes were coming without formally announcing that changes were coming. "I think there's no doubt that the players were disappointed as well in last year's All-Star Game. We all want to do a better job providing competition and entertainment for our fans." □

# Rafael Nadal says he thought about taking a mental health break a few years ago



**Spain's Rafael Nadal during a tribute after playing his last match as a professional tennis player in the Davis Cup quarterfinals at the Martin Carpena Sports Hall in Malaga, southern Spain, on early Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2024.**

**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Rafael Nadal thought about taking a mental health break from tennis a few years ago but "conquered it by always moving forward" and "slowly became myself again," the 22-time Grand Slam champion writes in an essay posted online Tuesday, less than a month after the last match of his career.

"Physical pain I was very used to, but there were times on the court when I had trouble controlling my breathing, and I couldn't play at the highest level. I don't have trouble saying it now. After all, we are human beings, not superheroes," Nadal says on The Player's Tribune.

"Thankfully, I didn't get to the point of not being able to control things like anxiety, but there are moments with every player when it's difficult to control your mind, and when that happens it's difficult to have total control of your game," he says. "There were months when I thought about taking a complete break from tennis to cleanse

my mind. In the end, I worked on it every day to get better."

The 38-year-old Nadal headed into retirement after playing for Spain in the Davis Cup in November, following two seasons filled with injury issues that limited him to competing only sparingly.

In the essay, he writes about the chronic pain in his left foot that first surfaced when he was 17 and says he was told then that he "would probably never play professional tennis again."

"I spent many days at home crying, but it was a great lesson in humility, and I was lucky to have a father the real influence I've had in my life who was always so positive," said Nadal, who won a record 14 championships at the French Open.

He mentions being nervous before matches, and some of the highlights of his career, and notes: "I hope that my legacy is that I always tried to treat others with deep respect." □





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## MLB study: Velocity, max efforts likely causing pitching injuries; rule changes should be considered

By **RONALD BLUM**  
AP Baseball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A year-long study by Major League Baseball concluded rising velocities, pitch shaping and emphasis on maximum effort are the likely causes of the vast increase in pitcher injuries and recommended exploring rules changes to address the problem.

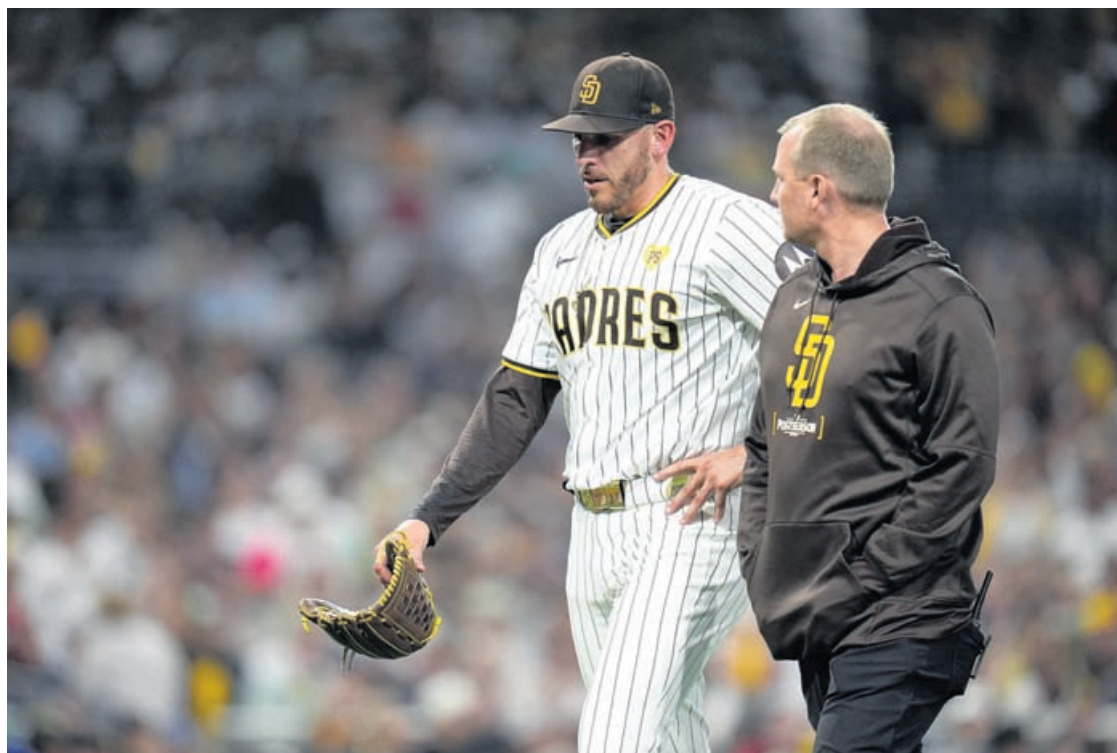
The 62-page report released Tuesday said the trends extended to high school and youth baseball because of the incentive to get noticed by professional scouts.

The study said there is no evidence linking the pitch clock to injuries.

Illustrated with 26 tables of data, the report was based on interviews with more than 200 people that included players, front office executives, orthopedic surgeons, athletic trainers, physical therapists, biochemists, major league, college and independent coaches, and international trainers.

"This is a landmark event," said Glenn Fleisig, director of biomechanics research at the American Sports Medicine Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, who participated in the study. "This is a very important first step, which is to identify the problem and identify the likely risk factors. I am pleased that there was such a consensus. ... The next step is to do various types of research studies."

Possible areas to be studied include offseason training and early season workload, non-game activity, defining and measuring fatigue, biomechanics and pitching style, obtaining more data from international leagues and differentiating



**San Diego Padres starting pitcher Joe Musgrove exits the game during the fourth inning in Game 2 of an NL Wild Card Series baseball game against the Atlanta Braves, Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024, in San Diego.**

results from domestic and international signings.

Major league pitcher IL placements increased from 212 in 2005 to 485 this year and days on the IL rose from 13,666 to 32,257.

"The most significant causes are likely the increased velocity of pitches, the emphasis on optimizing 'stuff' (a term referencing the composite movement characteristics of pitches, including horizontal and vertical break and spin rate), and the modern pitcher's focus on exerting maximum effort while pitching in both game and non-game situations," the report said.

"Some experts speculated on the potential influence of other factors on the short-term increase in injuries over the past several years, including the lasting effect of COVID-impacted seasons, the introduction of the pitch clock and perceived inconsistencies

in the surface grip of the baseball. There was not sufficient consensus or evidence to establish a link between these other factors and pitcher injuries."

The report said experts recommend MLB consider rules changes to "increase the value of pitcher health and durability and decrease the value of short-duration, max-effort pitching."

"For instance, playing rules could be adjusted or designed to encourage or require starting pitchers to preserve enough energy to allow them to pitch deeper into games," the report said.

"These incentives could be supported by roster rules that more appropriately regulate the availability of pitchers on a roster or in a team's bullpen for a given game, including potential changes to the number and frequency of transactions that allow clubs to re-

place pitchers on their rosters."

MLB experimented in the Atlantic League with a double-hook designated hitter from 2021-13, in which a team lost its DH if its starting pitcher didn't finish at least five innings in the last two seasons. MLB lowered the maximum on pitchers from 14 to 13 on June 20, 2022, though it is 14 from Sept. 1 on after rosters expand from 26 to 28. The minimum pitcher IL was restored to 15 days in 2022 after dropping to 10 for the previous five years.

Factors in injuries may include use of weighted balls in training, increased intensity of bullpen sessions, a possible decline in cardiovascular and endurance training, and workload management that incentivizes harder effort over shorter spans.

"Multiple medical experts described new injury patterns that they believe are

tied to the focus on velocity and max-effort pitching," the report said, listing latissimus and teres major tears, rib fractures and oblique strains.

### Among the data points:

1. Tommy John surgeries for major and minor league players increased from 104 in 2010 to a peak of 314 in 2020 and declined to 281 this year. Among those this year, 41 were in the major leagues or on minor league rehab assignments and 240 were with minor league clubs.

2. Since 2008, average mph velocity in the major leagues has risen from 91.3 to 94.2 for four-seam fastballs, 82.8 to 84.6 for sliders, 75.7 to 79.5 for curveballs and 81.7 to 85.5 for changeups. During that period, fastball usage declined from 60% to 48%. By comparison, fastball velocity in Nippon Professional Baseball was 91.1 this year.

3. IL days for pitcher elbow injuries rose from 3,940 in 2005 to 12,185 this year and for shoulder injuries increased from 2,634 to 5,445.

4. IL placements from spring training through opening day rose from 61 in 2017 to 112 this year and from day two through the end of the regular season from 303 to 352.

5. Starts of five or more innings dropped from 84% to 70% in the majors from 2005-25 and from 68.9% to 36.8 in the minors.

6. Thirty-five players selected in the top 10 rounds of this year's amateur draft had Tommy John surgery, up from four in 2005.

7. Prospects who threw 95 mph or higher at the Perfect Game National Showcase increased from three in 2018 to 36 this year. □